

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL MONTREAL
ZNE/AMCONSUL TORONTO (BY POUCH)

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: PQ RADICALS PUT PRESSURE ON GOQ

REF: A) QUEBEC 0121, B) QUEBEC 0104, C) QUEBEC 0091,
D) QUEBEC 0031

1. IN THE LAST MONTH, THERE HAS BEEN MUCH DISCUSSION IN QUEBEC PROVINCE OF THE PQ GOVERNMENT'S FORTHCOMING LANGUAGE LEGISLATION DESIGNED IN CULTURE DEVELOPMENT MINISTER CAMILLE LAURIN'S WORDS TO MAKE QUEBEC AS "PREVAILINGLY FRENCH AS ONTARIO IS ENGLISH." PRESSURES TO AMEND THE LEGISLATION ONE WAY OR ANOTHER ARE COMING FROM ALL SIDES OF THE ISSUE. NOWHERE WAS THE PRESSURE WHICH CAN COME FROM PQ'S RADICAL WING MORE EVIDENT THAN DURING THE LANGUAGE DEBATE OF THE MONTREAL-CENTRE REGIONAL ASSOCIATION MEETING HELD LAST WEEKEND. DESPITE PLEAS FOR MODERATION BY PREMIER LEVESQUE, LAURIN, AND OTHER CABINET MINISTERS, MONTREAL-CENTRE WING OF PQ NARROWLY APPROVED A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR PHASING OUT THE PROVINCE'S ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SCHOOL SYSTEM OVER NEXT 11 YEARS. THIS RESOLUTION GOES AGAINST EXISTING PQ PROGRAM GUARANTEEING ENGLISH-SPEAKING

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MINORITY ITS OWN STATE-FUNDED SCHOOL SYSTEM. OTHER LANGUAGE RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY 450 DELEGATES REPRESENTING 17 OF MONTREAL'S 31 RIDINGS INCLUDED RESOLUTION CALLING FOR FRENCH TO BE "ONLY OFFICIAL LANGUAGE" IN QUEBEC'S NON-EDUCATIONAL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS WITHIN FIVE YEARS. MANY DELEGATES ALSO URGED GOQ TO ADOPT IMMEDIATELY A SOCIALIST SYSTEM AND REVERSE HOLD OF CAPITALISM ON PROVINCE.

2. SOURCES IN THE GOVERNMENT QUICKLY COMMENTED THAT ASSOCIATION'S EDUCATIONAL RESOLUTION WILL HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO EFFECT ON GOVERNMENT'S NEW LANGUAGE POLICY, DUE SOMETIME IN NEXT TWO WEEKS. PREMIER LEVESQUE FELT CONSTRAINED TO CLARIFY ISSUE IN SPEECH TO 600 QUEBEC BUSINESSMEN MONDAY. HE OBSERVED THAT HE WAS IN NO WAY TIED TO WEEKEND RESOLUTION AS ONLY PROVINCE WIDE PARTY CONGRESSES CAN ALTER BASIC PQ PROGRAM. SUCH A CONGRESS IS PLANNED FOR MAY AND MONTREAL-CENTRE'S RESOLUTIONS WILL BE PRESENTED THEN. THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE THAT THEY WILL BE PASSED, HOWEVER, AS THE MONTREAL-CENTRE ASSOCIATION IS BY FAR THE MOST RADICAL OF THE 12 REGIONAL GROUPS THAT COMPRISE PQ. WHILE IMPORTANT, THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM IS LESS ACUTE OUTSIDE MONTREAL. MOST PEQUISTES WANT TO STUNT GROWTH OF ENGLISH SYSTEM BUT FEW SHARE MONTREAL-CENTRE'S DESIRE TO ANNIHILATE IT.

3. COMMENT: ACTION BY MONTREAL-CENTRE ASSOCIATION DEMONSTRATES DIFFICULTIES PQ HAS IN GOVERNING WHEN ONE OF ITS THREE BASIC CONSTITUENCIES (REFTEL D) IS HEAVILY LOADED WITH RADICAL NATIONALISTS. LEVESQUE'S TASK IS COMPLICATED BY PARTY'S STYLE OF "PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY." IT IS THE FIRST TIME IN QUEBEC'S HISTORY THAT A GOVERNMENT IS OPENLY COMMITTED TO A STEADY PROCESS OF CONSULTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO A STRONG POPULAR PARTY ORGANIZATION. GOQ IS LIVING UP TO ITS PROMISE TO ITS PARTY ORGANIZATION TO GRAPPLE PUBLICLY WITH THESE PROBLEMS EVEN IF RESULTING PUBLICITY IS EMBARRASSING AND FORCES PREMIER TO EXPLAIN SITUATION TO QUEBEC BUSINESSMEN (ANOTHER CONSTITUENCY) THE NEXT DAY. WHILE RADICALS DID GIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MANY PARTY MODERATES A FEELING OF UNEASINESS OVER WEEKEND, MODERATES CAN COUNT ON POLITICAL REALISM OF PEQUISTES FROM AREAS OUTSIDE CENTRAL MONTREAL TO CONTAIN RADICALS AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR CABINET'S MORE MODERATE LINE AT MAY CONGRESS. NONETHELESS, WEEKEND RESOLUTIONS REPRESENT FIRST SIGNIFICANT SPEAKING OUT BY HARDLINE MINORITY AND MORE VOCAL DISSENT FROM THAT GROUP BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER MAY CONGRESS SEEMS CERTAIN. THIS RELEASE OF PENT-UP FEELINGS MAY EITHER DEFUSE OR EXACERBATE SERIOUS PARTY UNITY PROBLEMS IN LONG RUN BUT IT DEFINITELY COMPLICATES POLICY FORMULATING AND FINE-TUNING TASKS FOR A GOVERNMENT INVOLVED IN SO MANY CRUCIAL UNDERTAKINGS AT ONE TIME AS GOQ CURRENTLY IS. MCNAMARA

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